

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the background of the study, research question, aim of the study, scope of the study and significance of the study.

### 1.1 Background

Literature is a good tool for educating children because it provides characters that can become their role models (Singh & Lu, 2003). People tend to identify with the characters they find in literature and unconsciously put themselves in the character's position and point of view (Vogler, 2007). Children in particular are very simple in their ways of thinking so they tend to accept what is told and presented to them easily. This makes children's literature become very influential in shaping the children's views of the world. One of the most common stories in children's literature is hero story. The story of a hero and his quest is a common thing, especially among children's literature. From heroes in literature, young children learn more about moral values and norms in their culture (Singh & Lu, 2003).

For a long time, the role of hero in stories was dominated by males, because it was once assumed that heroism was an inherently masculine trait (Hourihan, 2005). Most hero stories in popular literary works are males. The examples are Robin Hood from the English folktale about Robin Hood, Superman from DC Comic books and films, and Harry Potter from *Harry Potter* novel series. Female characters are often marginalized in male hero stories and are deemed not as important as the male characters. In children's literature especially, female characters are rare, and in some children literary works, they do not even exist (Hourihan, 2005; Flood, 2011). When female characters exist, they do not get heroic roles and most of them are portrayed as passive and docile (Hourihan 2005; Stone, 1975; Bressler, 1999). Female characters are portrayed as loving mothers, such as Mrs. Rabbit in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, beautiful and young brides, such as Snow White from the story of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, or supportive goddesses or fairy godmothers, such as the fairy godmother in the

story of *Cinderella*. Female characters in most hero stories exist merely as a support for the males. The goddesses and fairy godmothers are there to support the hero on his journey. An example is the goddess Athena, who helps the hero Odysseus during his journey in *Odyssey*. If not as a support, female characters are regarded as the price that the hero will get at the end of their journey, being a bride that he will marry. The example is the sleeping princess in *Sleeping Beauty*, who is awoken from her slumber by the kiss of a prince. If female characters are not portrayed as submissive and passive, then they are demonized and regarded as “wild”. These women are usually portrayed as witches and temptresses. An example is Medusa, a woman with snakes as her hair, who appears in Greek mythology.

All these portrayals convey a message that females in general occupy less important roles in society than males and they are dictated to be passive and submissive to males. If they do not submit to males, then they are “evil” and “bad”. These portrayals are unfair and can be harmful when presented to children who view the world in a simple way (Hourihan 2005; Stone, 1975). Heine et al. (1999) maintain that children’s literature has to provide positive female characters that are smart, strong and capable to become role models for girls.

As the time goes by, the representation of females in media and literature started to undergo significant changes. Strong, tough and independent female characters started to appear in literary works such as comic books, novels, and films. Female characters started to get heroic roles and a new type of character, which Danehy (2007) and Goodwill (2009) term as ‘female hero’ emerged. Goodwill (2009) differentiates female hero from male hero in that female hero combines both traditional masculine traits that belong to traditional male heroes with traditional feminine traits. Female hero can be portrayed as brave, strong and intelligent, but she can also be portrayed as nurturing, emotional and motherly. The examples of female hero in literature are Ellen Ripley from *Alien* film series, Wonder Woman from DC Comic books, Lyra Belacqua from *His Dark Materials* novel series and Lucy Pevensie from *The Chronicles of Narnia* novel series. Several other studies about female heroes in literature and media have been done. For example, the study about the main character of Disney film *Brave* by Morante

(2015), the study about the female main characters of *Maleficent* by Mărginean (2014), and the study regarding heroic female characters in myths and modern literature by, Danehy (2007), Campbell (2009) and Marlina (2015). In films, female heroes as characters are constructed using tools such as film narrative or stylistic elements and methods of characterization.

While female heroes in literature start to increase in numbers, there are merely a few of them that appeared in children films. One of the film companies that have a big influence in children films is Walt Disney Company. Disney films are among the most popular children films in the world. Among Disney's female characters, there are some that can be considered heroes. The examples are Fa Mulan from the film *Mulan* (1998), Judy Hopps from the film *Zootopia* (2016), and Moana from the film *Moana* (2016), which is the object of this research. *Moana* is a story about a girl from a tribe on a small Polynesian island. She goes on a journey to give back a sacred stone to its rightful place to save the world. There are several studies regarding the film techniques, particularly the computer-generated imagery (CGI), in *Moana*. Frost, Stomakhin and Narita (2017) as well as Palmer, Garcia, Drakeley, Kelly and Habel (2017) discuss the visual effects of water movements in the film. Bryant, Coony and Garcia (2017) study the visual effects of Te Ka, the lava demon. Byun, Ergenian and Culp (2017) study the visual effects of disco lamp in Tamatoa's lair. Regarding the story, there is a study by Streiff and Dundes (2017) regarding the representation of gender stereotype in *Moana*. However, the study about character construction which focuses on the main character has not been found.

This research aims to study how a female hero is constructed in *Moana* (2016). This research is done to find out how the filmmakers construct the idea of female hero using different tools. The analysis of this study focuses on the tools that are used for the construction of the character, which are film techniques and methods of characterization in film. Some textual evidence in the form of screenshots and dialogues will be taken from the film and will be analyzed using film techniques and methods of characterization. The data then will be discussed to see what kind of representation that comes from Moana's construction as a female hero.

## 1.2 Research Question

This research attempts to answer the following question:

- How is a female hero constructed in *Moana*?

## 1.3 Aim of the Study

This research aims to find out how Moana as a female hero is constructed in the film.

## 1.4 Scope of the Study

The study investigates the tools that are used to construct Moana as a female hero and the process of construction. The discussion will focus on her portrayal as a hero and what her construction as a hero shows.

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

The study focuses on the film stylistic elements and characterization as tools that are used to construct Moana as a female hero. This study is expected to explain the process of how a female hero is constructed in film using different tools and see what representation that comes from the construction of the current female hero in literature.

## 1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

Here are some clarifications of key terms that are mostly used in this research:

**Construct** : “To build something or put together different parts to form something whole” (Cambridge dictionary online, 2017). In this research, it refers to the creation of meaning or idea in the film by using different tools.

**Hero** : “A hero is someone who is willing to sacrifice his own needs on behalf of others. . .” (Vogler, 2007, p.29). “A person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great” (Cambridge dictionary online, 2017). From the

two definitions, it can be concluded that a hero is someone who is admired for risking himself or herself to help other people.

## **1.7 Organization of the Paper**

This paper is composed in the following organization:

1. Abstract

This section functions as the summary of the research. It presents brief information about the content, which will be elaborated further.

2. Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter contains the background of the research, which explains the reason why this research is conducted and what contribution it will make.

3. Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter explains the theories that base this research and the findings of other researchers regarding the topic.

4. Chapter Three: Research Method

This chapter explains the method of the research and other details, such as the nature of the data that are examined, how and where the data are obtained, and how they are analyzed.

5. Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

This chapter explains the findings after the research or analysis is finished. The findings are analyzed and discussed based on the theories that are mentioned before in Literature Review.

6. Chapter Five: Conclusion and Suggestions

This chapter sums up the information from the Findings and Discussions and concludes the idea as the result of the analysis. Suggestion for future research is also presented.

7. Appendix

This section contains additional information such as the raw data that are used for analysis.